Mel Bay Presents

The Complete Chopin Mazurkas

FIFTY-ONE MAZURKAS, NEWLY ARRANGED FOR SOLO GUITAR

Arranged by Stephen Aron

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for JoNell

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Preface

by Stephen Aron

WHY THE CHOPIN MAZURKAS?

I had been arranging piano music for solo guitar for many years when the notion of this collection occurred to me. After listening closely to the entire set for some time I determined that the project was not only possible but desirable, and set about the task of creating the arrangements.

My motivation was manifold. First and most compelling, I loved the pieces and felt I understood them deeply. A lifetime Chopin devotee, his musical style and harmonic language were well known to me; it had long been a dream to play his music. Chopin's own performances are repeatedly described as soft to the point of fault. One listener described the urge to put his ear flush against the piano soundboard to just hear him. What pianist-composer more readily invites guitar interpretation than one whose own performance is so soft as to be "sylph-like"? Most of Chopin's scores, though, for a "complete" treatment, I found ungracious on the guitar: from the Nocturnes (too complex and wide-ranged) to the Waltzes (mostly too fast), to the Etudes (too pianistic), to the Polonaises and Sonatas (too large and heroic), little seemed to invite consideration. Except the Mazurkas. These unique works offered a set of characteristics that powerfully invited a guitar interpretation.

First, they are by most standards, miniatures. By far, the majority of the pieces are short; most of the longer ones incorporate several repeats, or are long by virtue of a slow tempo, not a large volume of material. The miniature is a form that is well suited to the guitar, given its limited dynamic range. The guitar repertoire is replete with works on this scale; miniatures are often more effective than a given guitar composer's larger-scale efforts.

They feature mostly simple textures. The majority of the material is comprised either of simple melody in the treble with simple bass-chord-chord accompaniment or block-chords, both textures comfortably suited to the guitar. In Mazurkas whose textures open up into more complex counterpoint, melody in the bass, or canonic style, these would present more challenge to render convincingly, but their number, as a percentage of the whole, is low.

Their tempi are generally moderate. More are slow than fast, and in the faster ones, the texture is usually thinner. As a rule, if the required tempo of an original is not fast, then the chance of sounding convincing in an arrangement of it on the guitar is much improved. In this regard, the Mazurkas are perfect.

They are derived from a folk model. So much guitar music is folk-based, the point hardly needs to be made here that folk music-inspired compositions find themselves at home on the guitar. While the majority of such music is Spanish or South American in origin, there is no reason to discount folk music of Poland as a potentially rich resource in the same regard.

They are sweepingly melodic and romantic. Naturally, the guitar is at home in all styles of music; nevertheless, many people's first and most enduring attraction to the guitar is a product of its ability to convey intimate, expressive melodies. The most famous and oft-performed and recorded guitar works fall into this category. Ironically, the mid-nineteenth century, the period when this compositional style was at its apex, is a period during which relatively little high quality concert guitar music was published (compared both to piano music and to the volumes of guitar music published in the period immediately preceding this one). This historical period represents an area of the repertoire that is, in many ways, weak. The Mazurkas would generously fill this gap.

There are lots of them! Thirteen Opuses, and more, totaling fifty-one compositions, represent a "cycle" that would be unique in our repertoire. Once rendered playable by the arrangement process, it would offer guitarists of every level an infinite number of possible groupings for performance, including but by no means limited to a two-concert full-cycle performance (it is over 160 minutes of music).

In summary, in the Mazurkas, I found an enormous resource of light-textured, moderate tempo, folk-derived, romantic miniatures, by a composer whose pedigree required no defense. They would at once be a collection from which students could select a few for recital, or from which a giant tour-de-force performance project could be assembled, worthy of the greatest musical personalities of our day.

THE ARRANGEMENTS

As indicated in the introduction below, there are numerous and widely conflicting sources for these pieces. For this edition, I decided to adhere to one source, regarded as highly reliable (Schirmer, 1915). The alternatives, to either attempt to cull from various sources and cobble together a unique personal edition, or to account for every variable in lengthy ossias or appendices, were dismissed as undesirable or unwieldy.

Before preparing these arrangements, I established a set of criteria for both musical and performance considerations. I found as the process unfolded, that I was able to faithfully abide by these "rules of engagement" for the vast majority of the material. Following is a list of these criteria:

A) Absolute Melodic Integrity.

I decided to adhere strictly to the contour and octave disposition of the notes in the melodies, throughout a given piece. This meant that a key had to be selected that would enable the entire melody to remain intact, never transposing by an octave to render a section more comfortable. I felt that the sacrifice in musical architecture would be too significant if a treble trio, for instance, is moved to the baritone range for comfort's sake. A good example is Op. 7, No. 2. The B section, as presented here, is configured completely above the twelfth fret, in a passage that is highly unusual to play. The musical results, though are stunning. It would have been a simple matter to move it down an octave, but it would then have become a different, less effective piece.

B) Bass Notes.

With almost no exception, the bass notes presented here are original. The octave placement of bass notes is as close to original as possible, but is altered where necessary. Rarely, a different note is given for the musical effect. An example is in Op. 63, No. 2. At the beginning of the recap in m. 41, the bass note should be low F♯. As a low F♯ is not available, but the note one octave higher fails to create a full enough sonority, a low open D has been added below the F♯ to help convey the weight of the musical gesture.

C) Inner Voices when Texture is Contrapuntal.

There are a number of occasions when the texture is three-voice counterpoint. At these times, the inner voice was given as literal a presentation as possible. When the writing is canonic, it is presented absolutely literally to avoid any weakening of the effect of that unusual technique.

D) Harmony

The harmony is never altered in these arrangements. In a few occasions, a chord had to be thinned. If so, this process of pitch deletion follows strict hierarchical guidelines in which non-melodic doublings go first, and other non-melodic pitches go next, least "colorful" first.

E) Form

Form is presented as in the original. Even though it is common for many performers to alter the form of some of these pieces in performance, this edition presents all pieces in their original form as it appeared in the source edition.

E) Rhythm

All rhythmic notation is presented as in the original except when, occasionally, a note duration was shortened to more accurately reflect the result on the guitar (when, for instance, a left hand shift forces a fretted note to end early). Therefore, rhythmic notation is essentially literal.

F) Phrasing, Articulation, Dynamics, Expression Markings

All are taken directly from the primary source and are presented unchanged. Rarely, a phrase marking is used in the original which connects the notes of an entire section under one phrase line. Only those were omitted in this edition, and replaced with the marking "legato". As pedaling indications have no direct representative in guitar notation, they are omitted.

G) Key / Scordatura / Twentieth Fret

In very few cases, the original key was used. My choice of key was determined by a number of interrelated considerations, including the high note and general tessitura of the melody, the various key centers of the sections, the structurally important low bass notes, pedal tones, and naturally, the tuning of the guitar. A number of the arrangements have been made in which one or more strings is retuned to better accommodate the music. By far, the majority of selections are either in standard tuning (eighteen) or in one of the two most popular scordaturas, 6=D (thirteen), and 6=D/5=G (eight); some, though, require more adventurous scordaturas (See Thematic Index on pages 4 -7). These tunings in all cases make otherwise difficult or unplayable passage work highly idiomatic and guitar-friendly. There are five selections that recommend the use of a guitar with a twentieth fret (high C); only one of these offers no standard fretboard-length alternative.

H) Fingering

Every passage in the collection is carefully configured for maximum ease and musical effect. Sometimes left hand fingerings are recommended which are not the easiest solution, but which allow the most compelling stylistic and expressive interpretation. In all cases a few basic preferences may be noted. There are a minimum of barres; as a rule, left-hand shifts are used instead of left-hand extensions. Extensive use of guide fingers and a liberal use of hinge barres both contribute to playability. Right hand indications are given only where it was considered essential. Nearly

all passages are playable without right hand finger repetitions or splayings, or inverted string crossings. In general, the guitarist will find that every passage conforms with the basic technique of classical guitar as it is currently practiced; no radical new techniques have been invented to accommodate the textures in these scores. (The extended cross-string trill techniques required in Mazurkas Opus 30, No 4 and W/o Op. [a Emile Gaillard] are unusual but not unprecedented).

I) Notation

Standard classical guitar notation is used throughout, with the following exceptions:

Barre indicators are specific, with a small superscript Arabic number to the right of the Roman numeral, indicating the number of strings to be barred. Where there is no such indication, it is a six-string barre. While the guitarist may find it more comfortable in some instances to barre more strings than indicated, this system quickly alerts the player to the minimum required.

Guide finger indicators (a small horizontal line to the left of a fingering) are used consistently, as this facet of left hand technique can greatly facilitate the legato playing essential to the style.

Slurs are notated, almost without exception, connecting note heads. The slurs given are purely editorial; players may wish to delete them or add more, according to taste.

Phrase lines are above (or below) the staff, generally connecting the tips of note stems or beams. As this score has substantially more phrase lines than most guitar scores, their presence can be confusing at first. The placement of the lines as indicated, therefore, will help to distinguish them from slurs.

Trills, whether notated tr or with a trill sign, are executed starting on the main note. Longer trills are often executed between two strings, and the left hand fingering is set up to accommodate this effect (note Op. 68, No. 2). The recommended fingering is: p-a-i-m, with p on the beat.

PERFORMANCE ADVICE

A) General

The most challenging aspect of the pieces in this collection for the guitarist is the fundamental unfamiliarity of the style. There is no body of correlating guitar repertoire that sufficiently prepares the guitarist for the musical subtleties central to a convincing performance of these works. Garnering the necessary musical awareness requires much active listening. It is recommended that the guitarist steep him/herself in piano performances of the Mazurkas, as well as of other Chopin works. It will soon become obvious that, even among pianists, there is currently a wide array of interpretations. A startling range of tempi, styles of articulation, uses of rubato, even repeat schema, emerge in just a few listenings. There is much to be learned, however, from each interpretation, and ultimately all this varying input will better inform the guitarist's approach. Obviously, the author's recording of the entire collection (MB98411CD), will be an invaluable aid in grasping how this unique music works on guitar.

B) How To Approach This Edition

It is not recommended that the guitarist try and "read through" the book. The individual selections differ so widely in difficulty, even within a single opus number, that the exercise may prove daunting. Additionally, many of the most playable are among those near the end of the collection. Further, as the scordatura requirements are determined irrespective of an individual work's placement in a given opus number, there will be some time-consuming retuning if the pieces are played "in order". The Thematic Index on pages 4 -7 is an easy reference tool for identifying individual pieces by difficulty level and tuning. The Index simplifies the process of determining which pieces may be accessible, in a given tuning, depending on one's playing level. For this Index, each piece has been graded on a scale of 1-10 for difficulty. Therefore, if one wished to play the easiest pieces in the collection in standard tuning, one would quickly be directed to begin with Op. 24, No. 1 and Op. 33, No. 1, etc.

In picking Mazurkas for performance, a tradition has been long-established by pianists, including those in Chopin's day, of performing selections according to preference, mood, ability and circumstance. It is not necessary to perform an entire opus number as a "set" (see Introduction); in fact it is uncommon to hear this approach embraced by pianists. Consequently, the guitarist is encouraged to assemble "sets" of Mazurkas according to personal preference and ability (and tuning), drawing from the entire collection.

If generally unfamiliar with these works, the guitarist will delight in their range of expression and texture. They include works both danceable and hummable, sorrowful and joyful, strophic and through-composed, harmonically straightforward and harmonically adventurous (even torturous), virtuosically fast and epitaphically slow. There are some that are so easy on guitar they might have been originally conceived for it; there are others that offer a real challenge to even the experienced player. In short, there is something here for everyone.

Introduction

by Brooks Toliver

The Mazurkas of Frédéric Chopin (1810-49) are important from many angles: as representative of his entire professional life (from Op. 6, published at the age of 22, to Op. 63 of 1847, two years before his death), they are critical to an understanding of his development; as works of a Polish expatriate (Op. 6 was composed in Vienna, the other sets in Paris), they invite political readings; as the first--and really the only--canonized mazurkas, they belong in any history of the development of piano literature in general and the character piece in particular; finally, as great music, they demand our consideration from a purely aesthetic perspective. I have grouped the following notes into subsections that expand on these and other aspects of the mazurkas. While the topics form a loose progression, they are sufficiently self-contained to make sense independently from one another, should the reader choose to approach them that way.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

One could generalize that Chopin grew up understanding two fundamentally different varieties of mazurka. One was the traditional, folk mazurka, which he absorbed in village festivals outside of Warsaw in the province of Mazovia. The three principal manifestations of this genre--the mazur, oberek, and kujawiak--would all resonate in Chopin's own mazurkas (it has become something of a connoisseur's game to identify these specific shadings in individual works[1]). While I summarize the folk-mazurka traits in the next section, important here is the basic point that the mazurkas Chopin heard in the country were for dancing; without any deep grounding in the dances themselves, one can nonetheless hear in Chopin's accentuated beats and characteristic rhythms the gestures of stamping, sliding, gyrating, hopping, etc. The other mazurka tradition familiar to Chopin, that emanating from the parlors of Warsaw, likely supplied Chopin with a valuable aesthetic precedent: these "city mazurkas" were stylizations of their country relatives, and Chopin may have owed to them the inspiration of writing not merely mazurkas, but works about the mazurka. While there are surely other aspects of the urban tradition integral to our understanding of Chopin, none can be more important than this.

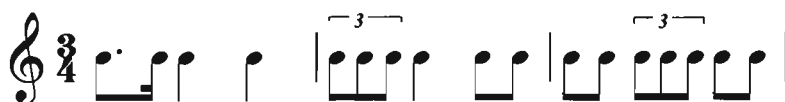
Another historical issue relevant to Chopin's mazurkas is the political environment of contemporary Poland. By the late eighteenth century the nation had ceased to exist, technically speaking, having been partitioned by Russia, Prussia, and Austria. Modern events have shown us to what degree such effacements prompt nationalistic counter-movements, and "Polishness" in the early nineteenth century proves no exception. On one hand, the connection of these developments to Chopin and the mazurkas is not as simple as it has traditionally been construed[2]. On the other, it is fair to say that many in and since Chopin's time have read political sentiments into his mazurkas. The tendency was encouraged by Chopin's status as an émigré (read: "exile"), which to some personified the state of the Polish nation as a whole. Furthermore, the exodus of fellow Poles to Chopin's adopted home of Paris in 1830-31 (after an unsuccessful coup d'état against Russian occupiers) resulted in an ever greater proportion of his audience reading a nationalist agenda into his most Polish of compositions.

FOLK ELEMENTS

What sets Chopin's mazurkas apart from his other works? There are many answers to this question, some complex, some relatively straightforward. I limit this section to the latter: it amounts to an itemization of musical characteristics that would have reminded Chopin's Polish listeners of the folk mazurka, while probably sounding "ethnic" to his western European audiences. Little of what follows requires extensive elaboration; hence my choice of outline form with minimal commentary and examples cited only where necessary.

I. Rhythm. The rhythmic tendencies noted below, while obviously serving more than one musical purpose, have the obvious effect of providing nuance to the mazurkas' pervasive triple meter.

- A. Accented second and/or third beats of measures.
- B. Triplets.
- C. Rhythmic cross-patterns suggesting duple within the prevailing triple meter: Op. 6 no. 3, opening; Op. 24 no. 2, opening.

D. Characteristic rhythmic patterns; among the more common ones:

II. Melody (and phrasing). While actual folk-melody borrowings are rare among Chopin's mazurkas, the following traits evoke such melodies[3].

A. A tendency toward modal inflections.[4]

1. Lydian (the most frequently invoked mode; recognized as such by the raised fourth degree of the scale): Op. 56 no. 2, mm. 53-68.

2. Phrygian (most noticeable by the lowered second degree): Op. 41 no. 2, m. 15.

B. Repetition.

1. Of whole melodies.

2. Of motives within melodies. For examples of both, see Op. 7 no. 5.

Obviously, such repetition has ramifications in the areas of pitch content (it lends itself to hovering around certain notes) and form (where it helps to foreground the process of sectional reiteration and alternation), which I explore later.

C. Ornaments. Typical of the mazurkas is the inverted mordant, although one occasionally finds the more extended flourishes characteristic of Chopin's other genres; for an example of a mazurka with the florid ornamentation of a nocturne (along with its atmospheric ambiance), see Op. 17 no. 4.

D. Phrases ending on the second beat of the measure: Op. 7 no. 1, all sectional endings.

III. Harmony.[5]

A. Modality. The melodic modal inflections mentioned above have a counterpart in the harmonic underpinning, which often reveals itself in non-dominant approaches to the tonic: Op. 41 no. 1, opening (phrygian).

B. Drones. Repetitive open fifths occur frequently in the mazurkas, conjuring up the dudy (bagpipe): Op. 68 no. 3, mm. 33-44.

C. Pedal Points: Op. 68 no. 2, opening.

This list of rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic tendencies should not be taken as anything other than a preliminary introduction to the folk characteristics of Chopin's mazurkas. Keep in mind that there are obviously other traits not covered here, many of which the guitarist will instinctively recognize as the mazurkas grow more familiar. Also keep in mind that a deeper understanding of the topic would require study of at least two related ones not broached here: 1) how the folk-mazurka traits interact when set in motion with each other, and 2) how Chopin's manipulation of these traits varies over the course of his output.[6] These caveats registered, let us advance to other aspects of the mazurkas.

FORM, CHROMATICISM, HUMOR

At first hearing, form may not seem a particularly intriguing aspect of Chopin's mazurkas. As mentioned earlier, most of them fall into a series of short, repetitive sections whose alternations usually add up to something of a ternary or rondo structure. The relative squareness and brevity of these sections has undoubtedly encouraged the larger (and formerly ubiquitous) view of Chopin as relatively uninterested in matters of form. In fact, recent studies have shown just the opposite: the diversity and abstract logic of Chopin's mazurka-forms makes very clear that the composer tailored form to aesthetic needs rather than forcing his mazurkas into pre-cut designs. Jeffrey Kallberg provides evidence of this formal sensitivity in Chopin's habit of

a) constructing a wide variety of reprise-types; some constitute literal repeats, while others foreshorten or substantially alter the recapitulated material;

b) establishing tonal relationships between the mazurkas of a given set;

c) placing the longest mazurka at the end of a set, and providing that mazurka with the most substantial coda (i.e,. a longer, more chromatic, and more thematically important coda than those earlier in the set);

d) grounding the most unstable codas with concluding, "epigrammatic" themes that orbit tightly around the tonic.[7]

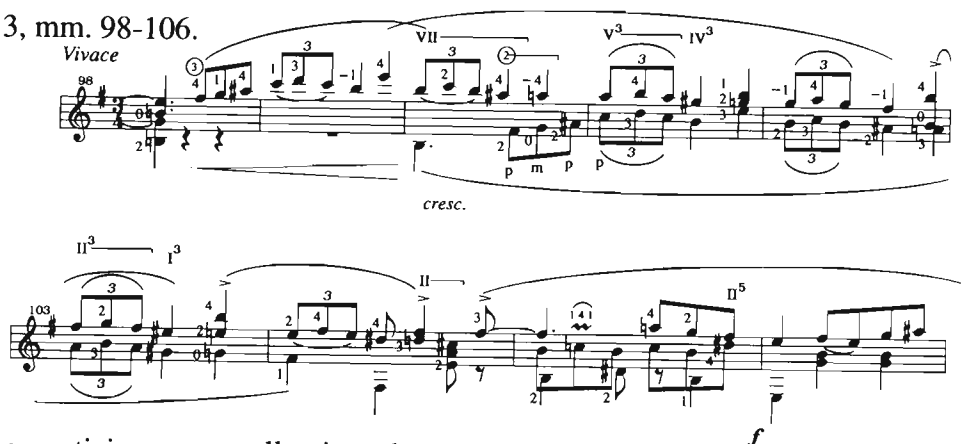
While these observations suggest in a general way Chopin's attention to formal detail, a glance at one specific formal component, his transitions, demonstrates the cleverness with which he structured his mazurkas. Certainly the

mazurkas reveal all manner of transitions and retransitions, but the following strategy accounts for a large number of them: Chopin destabilizes the close of one section through chromatic alteration (often a chromatic slide), motivic fragmentation (usually of the tail end of the previous theme), and sometimes, a blurring of the meter. After thus disorienting the listener, Chopin returns to stability, usually in the form of a reprise of the opening section of the mazurka. Op. 56 no. 1 works this way (mm. 77-81; 135-143), as does Op. 30 no. 4. In both cases, the listener is slowly made aware of the fact that the tail-end motive heard throughout the transition bears a clear relationship to the opening of the theme that follows (and when that following theme reveals itself as a reprise of something familiar, one cannot help but feel that Chopin has played a gentle joke).

This premium on formal logic is evident throughout the mazurkas. The chromatic slide near the end of Op. 30 no. 4 may at first sound unprepared; in fact, it has a long history, beginning with the lower half-step central to the opening theme (m. 1-4). In the second section (m. 33-64), Chopin isolates this lower half-step in the accompaniment and foregrounds it through constant reiteration. Midway through the mazurka (mm. 63-65), he chains these minor seconds into two successive drops which perform the structural function of ushering in the third section (con anima, m. 65-94). The ending thus amounts to a culmination, as the music tumbles nine successive half-steps (from D to F in the bass) into a plagal cadence in the tonic G minor. Op. 59 no. 3 shows a similar desire to justify an audacious moment through large-scale logic: the mazurka begins with an eight-by-eight measure theme that immediately strikes the ear as already transitional. True, it is neither metrically confusing nor chromatic; but after a promising two-measure opening, the theme spirals downward through nearly six measures of tail-end fragmentation (it will then repeat the process en route to the relative major; Ex. 1).

Ex. 1: Op. 59 no. 3, opening.

Chopin clearly poses this as a formal problem: how do you retransition to a theme that is itself transitional? His solution is for the retransition to annex the first half of the theme (i.e., its first eight-measure statement). He accomplishes this by placing most of those eight measures over an implied dominant pedal and providing the "missing" chromatic alteration throughout the six measures of tail-end fragmentation (rendered yet more unstable by the theme's canonic treatment; Ex. 2). The true reprise begins with the second eight-measure statement, where Chopin finally delivers the tonic, along with the original dynamic level of forte (m. 106-).

Ex. 2: Op. 59 no. 3, mm. 98-106.

Humor and Romanticism are usually viewed as antithetical to one another: a Romantic composer can sound lighthearted but lacks the musical means to tell a joke, so the common wisdom goes. The passages just cited initially seem to contradict that point: their hidden connections and reversals of musical identity are the very mechanisms of humor. Indeed, for all of its wistfulness and melancholy, the collection of mazurkas as a whole is loaded with such

moments. The contradiction dissolves, however, if we remember that Chopin was not solely a Romantic; in fact, the music discussed above--its avant-garde chromaticism notwithstanding--reveals the composer's proximity to Classicism. What is more, his musical denouements, whereby chromatically distorted passages are "unmasked" as music heard earlier, owe specifically to the plot archetypes of classical opera buffa.

AMBIGUITY, EXOTICISM, NATIONALISM

In the preceding section we witnessed Chopin's attentiveness to a formal logic based on clarity and linear thinking. Yet even a cursory glance through the mazurkas confirms that this is only part of the picture. Edward T. Cone offers another view by exploring moments when Chopin veils his processes in ambiguity.[8] Sometimes the composer merely poses riddles to be solved in the manner just described (indeed, Cone often points up an ingenious logic hidden beneath the surface). Yet in many other cases, Chopin seems intent on sustaining uncertainty to the very end. This happens literally in Op. 30 no. 2, where the opening music defies expectation precisely by not returning (Chopin has encouraged this expectation by pointing the structure toward a reprise: A - B - C - B [-A?])[9]. Other puzzles include Op. 33 no. 4, which launches into a new section in place of the expected reprise, and Op. 41 no. 3, whose final three measures duplicate the opening of the piece, thus seemingly promising a continuation that never comes.[10]

Relevant here as well are those chromatic slides whose disorienting effect overpowers the ensuing clarity. Op. 30 no. 4 works this way; it ends on the tonic, and in this sense is unproblematic. What is more, its chromatic slide answers to a formal logic, as we have just seen. But the concluding tonic is prepared via an extended plagal cadence during which the accompaniment curiously vanishes (mm. 136-8). This unorthodox ending, additionally defamiliarized as it is by the precipitous harmonic plunge, effectively undercuts whatever closure the tonic might otherwise establish. Kallberg, who joins Cone in hearing disorientation as a fundamental quality of the mazurkas, notes a similar circumstance in the realm of melody and form: some mazurkas reiterate their central material to a degree that implies endlessness. The result, in the case of Op. 7 no. 1, is that "the termination sounds artificial: it simply stops rather than closes."[11] The obsessive reiteration of motives in some of the mazurkas also serves to throw the listener off course, much as a constantly repeated word loses its familiarity.

What accounts for the mazurkas' enigmatic tendencies? The answer, it has been suggested, lies in a deeper scrutiny of nationalism.[12] The connection is at first elusive, for while some of the musical traits that contribute to the sense of ambiguity can probably be traced to ethnic Polish roots, ambiguity itself cannot (i.e., ambiguity cannot be defined as parcel of nationalism). The significance of ambiguity begins to emerge, however, when we realize that the majority of those critics invoking the concept of nationalism were actually hearing exoticism; in other words, they identified Polish traits not so much as foreign ones. The distinction may not seem revelatory at first, and in truth, musical nationalism and exoticism are not that far apart (both veer away from the mainstream-European musical tradition in matters of melody, harmony, and rhythm).[13] But whereas nationalism uses musical references to ground the listener in a particular tradition, exoticism aims for something less tangible: it conveys the impression of "otherness" (or put another way, "somewhere else"), and it does so by sounding strange (hence the ambiguity). This distinction does not rule out the coexistence of exoticism and nationalism within a single work; exoticism can actually be a means to nationalism, as should already be clear: its alien sounds allowed Chopin's western audiences to imagine the Polish essence they could not directly hear.

The point that Chopin's mazurkas mean different things to different people is as obvious as it is often overlooked. Less clear is the fact that even those intent on grasping nationalism in the mazurkas have not always agreed on what that concept signifies. Kallberg has studied evolving views of nationalism in the nineteenth century, and has shown in the process the dangers of reducing the term to a single pat meaning. Citing the work of Polish historians, he separates "political" from "cultural" nationalism.[14] As those titles imply, the former is explicit in its reference to the political status of Poland, while the latter delves into social customs, ethnic identities, etc. In brief, Chopin himself thought mainly along the lines of cultural nationalism, judging by his silence on overtly political matters. As for his public, Kallberg traces two developments through the mid to the late 1830's. Polish critics began the decade identifying cultural nationalism in the mazurkas, but soon began to place political readings between the lines ("between the lines" was necessary in light of Russian censorship in Poland). Western critics initially found no nationalist messages in the mazurkas, but, by the mid 1830's, had also gravitated toward the political readings that have prevailed to this day. Robert Schumann's comment in 1836 demonstrates this shift:

> If the mighty autocratic monarch of the north knew what a dangerous enemy threatened him in Chopin's works, in the simple tunes of his mazurkas, he would forbid this music. Chopin's works are cannons buried in flowers.[15]

THE SALON AND PARLOR TRADITIONS

Schumann's reference to cannons makes sense in light of political nationalism; but what are we to make of the flowers? They apparently evoke femininity, a quality more than one writer has attached to the mazurkas. No less than Franz Liszt spelled it out repeatedly:

> ...the mazurkas give a higher rank to the feminine element [than the polonaises]. Woman appears not as a protected figure but as queen.[16]

> No longer is the feminine and effeminate element driven back into shadowy recess [in the mazurkas]. On the contrary, it is brought out in the boldest relief, nay, it is brought into such prominent importance that all else disappears, or, at most, serves only as its accompaniment...[17]

While references to femininity in the mazurkas may make aural sense (meaning that many of us would confess to hear it), they raise a conceptual problem: what are feminine undertones doing in nineteenth-century nationalistic music? Certainly countries are commonly referred to as the "motherland," but is nationalism really the root of femininity in Chopin's mazurkas? It would appear not: femininity is more a cross stream that mingles with nationalism, creating a rich interplay of varied meanings in the process. What is more, this stream has more than a single source. One of those sources is simply the social environment of the traditional mazurka: elsewhere Liszt made clear that he was thinking of the prominent role of women in the actual dance.

A more elusive source of feminine connotations has to do with the tradition of the salon. "Salon" refers both to the room in upper-class (and upper-middle-class) homes where performances would take place, and, more loosely, to the social institution of hosting musical events, which included inviting noted musicians and cultured friends, discussing the arts, and so forth. Such is the environment in which Chopin made a living throughout his years in Paris, and in this sense, the mazurkas, along with most of his works, can be labeled "salon music." The social context of salon music accounts for the latter's stigma of flash-without-substance, an artistic death sentence strong enough to have prompted generations of writers to "save" Chopin's music from the association through various distancing strategies.[18] Be that as it may, the salon origins of Chopin's music have shaped our understanding of it, and this leads to the point of this discussion: salons were generally the woman's domain. Men naturally attended them; but women organized them, and this has undoubtedly encouraged the tradition of hearing feminine character in the mazurkas.[19]

Scholars have recently begun to reconstruct a third musical tradition (after the concert hall and the salon), that of the parlor. If the salon involved well known composers and virtuosi in house concerts, the parlor belonged to solidly middle-class (or "bourgeois") citizens bent on acquiring the sheen of culture through family music-making. The parlor, as captured by innumerable nineteenth-century artists and writers, was the very emblem of domestic bliss; common to that picture was an upright piano (whose popularity soared from the nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries) played by a daughter or two. The latter detail is crucial: amateur music-making in the home was seen as the province of women, and specifically of daughters, who "cultured" themselves partly as bait for potential spouses.[20]

What does this picture have to do with Chopin? Perhaps very little, given that his music is seldom linked to the parlor tradition. But that link, which is denied to many of his works on account of their technical difficulty, remains a possibility in the case of the mazurkas: most of them, like Mendelssohn's Lieder ohne Worte, lay within the abilities of the nineteenth-century daughter-pianist. While I know of no history tying the mazurkas to femininity via the parlor, history has shown us that widely held impressions can have roots in the least tenable--and often submerged--associations. Such is the case in one last source of the feminine connotation, which takes the form of a biographical anecdote: Chopin's long relationship with the trouser-wearing, cigar-smoking George Sand has surely "feminized" his music much in the same way that his sickness and early death have accentuated its lugubrious quality.

PERFORMING THE MAZURKAS

I close these notes with two performance-related questions that have recently occupied Chopin-historians: should individual opus numbers be performed in their entirety, and is there a single, authoritative edition of the mazurkas? Beginning with the first question: earlier we reviewed ways in which the sets of mazurkas hold together in matters of structure (with the largest mazurkas placed at the end of sets) and harmony (in the form of tonal recall between some of the mazurkas).[21] We know as well that Chopin himself--not his publishers--determined the ordering of mazurkas within each set.[22] Taken as a whole, this information implies that the composer envisioned the opus

numbers as unified wholes, which in turn would argue for performing entire sets, rather than isolated mazurkas.

Against this view stands the actual performance history as we know it: there is no record of Chopin himself having played a set in its entirety, nor of his ever having recommended the practice.[23] To the contrary, he evidently conceived of the mazurkas as "detachable"; surviving accounts of his performances suggest that he offered up selected mazurkas from different sets, as was his custom with other genres. This apparent contradiction of facts reflects less Chopin's era than our own: we tend to look for single, authoritative performance traditions, whereas the historical reality is more fluid; Chopin and his contemporaries allowed for a wide range of performance possibilities, in other words. In the realm of the mazurkas, this takes shape in an ideological coexistence of what Kallberg calls unity and compatibility: individual mazurkas are unified in the sense of being complete entities to be performed in their entirety. Complete opus numbers, on the other hand, consist of compatible mazurkas: if played as a set, they go well together.[24] To insist on a more specific performance-prescription is to misread Chopin's musical environment and create anachronistic scholarly "problems."

The same danger hovers over the question of an authoritative edition. The concept of a single, correct text, while traditionally dear to the musicologist, is not relevant to every musical tradition. It is certainly out of place in regard to Chopin, who knowingly sent contrasting versions of works to his French, English, and German publishers. Kallberg notes one case where Chopin sent out three different "final drafts" of one nocturne on the same day![25] Kallberg attributes this in part to Chopin's personal proclivity for rewriting: the composer simply could not copy a score without changing it. But Chopin's practices also point to the larger circumstance of a flexible musical tradition, one in which scores represented moments in an ongoing process, rather than final destinations. Indeed, the favoring of Chopin's last known revision of a given piece, while obviously a worthy pursuit, can mislead in implying a linear compositional progress that Chopin himself likely would not have recognized. This general picture does not mean that anything goes, editorially speaking. Rather, it encourages us to learn more about the background and genesis of individual works, as well as the social environment in which Chopin composed and published.

ENDNOTES

[1] For one such discussion, see Jim Samson, The Music of Chopin (London, 1985), 112-13.

[2] I elaborate on this in “Ambiguity, Exoticism, Nationalism.”

[3] Scholars disagree on which--if any-- of Chopin’s mazurkas contain any actual folk-melody borrowings. Samson calls Op. 24 No. 4 the only such case (The Music of Chopin, 113), to which Jeremy Siepmann adds Op. 68, No. 3, in Chopin: The Reluctant Romantic (Boston, 1995), 231.

[4] Discussed in detail in Samson, The Music of Chopin, 110-119

[5] Missing from this section is any discussion of the chromatic nature of Chopin’s mazurkas; as that chromaticism is not generally considered a product of the mazurkas’ folk roots, it more properly belongs elsewhere in these notes (see the next section).

[6] Samson describes something of an ebb and flow of folk characteristics throughout Chopin’s Mazurka production (The Music of Chopin, 110-19): the early mazurkas, folk-like; Op. 30 and 33, less so; Op. 41, resurgence of folk flavor; Op. 50, Op. 56, and Op. 59, folk traits submerged in a more sophisticated style; Op. 63, reminiscent of the more folk-like early mazurkas (I omit here the chronologically scattered mazurkas of Op. 67 and Op. 68, published posthumously).

[7] Jefferey Kallberg, “Hearing Poland: Chopin and Nationalism,” Chapter 7 of Nineteenth-Century Piano Music, ed. Larry Todd (New York, 1990), 224-32.

[8] Cone, “Ambiguity and Reinterpretation in Chopin,” Chapter 8 of Chopin Studies 2, eds. John Rink and Samson (Cambridge, 1988), 140-60.

[9] Cone, 157.

[10] Cone, 155-6.

[11] Kallberg, "Hearing Poland," 230.

[12] This explanation leans heavily on Kallberg, "Hearing Poland."

[13] Carl Dahlhouse elaborates on this point in "Nationalism and Music," in Between Romanticism and Modernism: Four Studies in the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century, trans. Mary Whittail (Berkeley, 1980), 79-101.

[14] Kallberg, "Hearing Poland," 244-53.

[15] Trans. by Kallberg, "Hearing Poland," 249.

[16] Bernard Gavoty, Frederic Chopin, trans. Martin Sokolinsky (New York, 1974), 377.

[17] Liszt, Life of Chopin, trans. Martha Walker Cook (Philadelphia, 1863), 58

[18] Andreas Ballstaedt explores this phenomenon in "Chopin as 'Salon Composer' in Nineteenth-Century German Criticism," Chapter 2 of Chopin Studies 2, 18-34.

[19] See Ballstaedt (previous note) for more on this environment.

[20] Ruth Solie describes this phenomenon in "Gender, Genre, and the Parlor Piano," Wordsworth Circle 25 (1994), 53-6.

[21] See previous section, "Form, Chromaticism, Humor."

[22] Kallberg, "Compatibility in Chopin's Multipartite Publications," Journal of Musicology 2 (1983), 392n2

[23] Kallberg, "Compatibility in Chopin's Multipartite Publications," 392-3

[24] Kallberg, "Compatibility in Chopin's Multipartite Publications," 416-17.

[25] The nocturne in question is Op. 62 No. 1; See Kallberg Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex History and Musical Genre (Cambridge, 1966), Note: for more on Chopin and editions, read the rest of the chapter from which this point is taken (7), "The Chopin 'Problem': Simultaneous Variants and Alternate Versions," 215-30.

Four Mazurkas, Opus 6

a Mlle. la Comtesse Pauline Plater

No. 1 All three sections of this first and most well-known of the set are challenging. The A section requires careful training of the left hand to enable the correct note durations. Rapid, large shifts and high position playing in the remaining two sections contribute to the sense of difficulty. Take special care to identify the spots for the high-D harmonic and the high-A harmonic, in measures 45 and 47, to ensure success in the climactic C section. Once rehearsed, it is remarkably effective.

No. 2 One of the most gracious on the guitar, this one poses no serious difficulties. Note the cross-string grace-notes in mm. 17, 30, and 42. Cross-string trills are indicated in mm. 15 and 32, though left-hand trills also work.

No. 3 A marvel on the guitar in the given scordatura, it is surprisingly accessible. Extra care should be given to the placement of the left hand for intonation in mm. 41-48, and for speed in mm. 35-36. Be careful to bring out the descending chromatic bass line in mm. 58-63.

No. 4 Brief and catchy, this apparent trifle has some lovely voice-leading subtleties which are given careful attention in the fingering. The occassional slight stretch of the left hand is worth the momentary effort for the resultant legato.

Mazurka Op. 6, No. 1
original key: F♯ minor
Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron
⑥= D
(♩= 132)
cresc.
legato
decresc.
rubato
cresc.
riten.
rallent.

Tempo I
III
cresc.
legato
dim.
cresc.
VIII
XV3
8va
scherz.
X3

XV3
8va
fz
X3
V2
riten.
a tempo
III
legato
VIII
p
pp

Mazurka Op. 6, No. 2

original key: C♯ minor

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

⑥ = D

Sotto voce (𝅗𝅥. = 63)

p *legato*

con forza

cresc.

f

leggiero

calando

a tempo
gajo
con forza
decresc.

sotto voce
sempre legato
p
p
cresc.
con forza
p
rubato
f
con forza

Mazurka Op. 6, No. 3

original key: E major

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

f
cresc.
VII5
V3
ff
p
VIII2
XII3

XII³
X³
VIII³
VII³
V³
cresc.
f
stretto dim.
VII⁵
risvegliato
VII⁵
VII⁵
p
VIII
p

69
cresc.
73
VII5
V3
77
p
81
f
84
87
p decresc.
rit.
pp

Mazurka Op. 6, No. 4
Presto, ma non troppo
original key: E♭ minor
Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron
(𝅗𝅥. = 76)
p
fz
tr
1.
2.

Five Mazurkas, Opus 7

a Monsieur Johns de la Nouvelle-Orleans

No. 1 Perhaps the best-known Mazurka in the entire collection, this irresistable piece lies comfortably on the guitar. Be wary of taking it too fast; a moderate tempo is more effective. It is recommended that the drone fifths in the C section are played with p/i, better enabling the delicacy of the musical gesture.

No. 2 One of the most beautiful of the earlier Mazurkas, this one lies well on the guitar, in spite of its high tessitura. Some care is required to play clearly mm. 23-26, but the effect is highly unusual and very effective.

No. 3 This offering is a somewhat more involved composition than the others so far and, though difficult in spots, sounds hauntingly beautiful on the guitar. The block-chords in the C section take special care to master, but if played with a lighter touch than that associated with piano interpretations, they are easier to control. The key-change/ texture-change in the section immediately following is a favorite moment of the early Mazurkas.

No. 4 This one requires a very light, quick touch, as the tempo should be quite fast. The unusual scordatura enables an easy low subdominant pedal in the C section, and is well worth the effort to retune.

No. 5 This last one in the set is also best played very fast and light. Take care to distinguish the triplet rhythm from the dotted rhythm, and to mute the open third string G on the downbeat of measure eight. Chopin's cryptic instruction "DC senza fine", if taken literally, implies playing the piece over and over without end; indeed, some pianists repeat a second time, for three times through altogether.

Mazurka Op. 7, No. 1

original key: B♭ major

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

II3
p legato
stretto
IV5
poco rall.
a tempo
f
tr

sotto voce
pp
rubato
poco rall.
a tempo
cresc.
1.
2.
fz

Mazurka Op. 7, No. 2

a tempo
poco rall.
1.
2.
dolce
sempre legato
scherz.

IX5
VIIh
f
fz
riten.
a tempo
p
dolce
VII5
scherz.
1.
2.
II3
D.C. al Fine

Mazurka Op. 7, No. 3

original key: F minor

Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

con forza
cresc.
p
stretto
dolce
p
stretto
dolce
fz
f
ten.
p

ten.
ff
p
ten.
VIII5 VI4
VIII5
f
p
ten.
VI4
ff
p
V
p marcato
III5
III4 III4
V4

III⁵
smorz.
pp
riten.
pp
legato
Tempo I
f
con forza
p
rubato

94
98
102
III3
8va
pp

Mazurka Op. 7, No. 4

original key: A♭ major

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

dolciss.
staccato
riten.
p sempre legato
molto rallent.
smorz.
pp sotto voce
a tempo

Mazurka Op. 7, No. 5

original key: C major

Four Mazurkas, Opus 17

à Mlle. Lina Freppa

No. 1 The highly unusual scordatura employed here makes a convincing guitar interpretation possible with little difficulty. The aural surprise of the open-C pedal in the C section is delightful and most effective. While requiring a sure touch and an assertively rhythmic approach, it presents few real challenges.

No. 2 A gorgeous, nocturne-like selection, this Mazurka is highly effective on guitar. While some higher-position playing and some left-hand reaching is required, the results are well worth it. The section with the B♭ pedal is extraordinary and quite easy. The last eight measures invite the guitar to show off one of its greatest strengths: playing extremely quietly.

No. 3 The scordatura and key choice here enable the guitarist to use open strings for the pedal points in each section. The tessitura is high, but the musical effect is delightfully wistful and serene. An unhurried approach is preferred in the A section, with plenty of time between phrases; play more in tempo however, in the remaining sections.

No. 4 More a nocturne than a mazurka, this exquisite piece is one of the gems of the entire collection. Lying comfortably on the guitar in the given key, it works gratifyingly well. The elaborate melodic embellishments, however, require considerable effort to render smoothely. They should float effortlessly above the accompaniment without sounding overly beholden to it; they need not be played fast. Measures 15 and 55 have been re-notated to reflect actual execution on the guitar; the original shows an even distribution of notes in the treble relative to the bass, that is, five eighth notes per beat. The D major section is an excellent study in the long crescendo: control the pacing and direction for the full 32 bars for the best effect. An extremely slow tempo is recommended.

Mazurka Op. 17, No. 1

original key: B♭ major

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

VII
V5
fz
p
dolce
V2
8va
dim.
8va

46
f
fz
51
55
fz
fz
59
dim.
63
f
67
fz

Mazurka Op. 17, No. 2

dolce
p
pp

stretto
a tempo
f
p
riten.
8va
loco
IX2
X2

Mazurka Op. 17, No. 3

original key: A♭ major

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

23
stretto
legato
riten.
27
a tempo
p
31
35
39
42
1.
2.
Fine
p

cresc.
dim.
smorz.
p
cresc.

VIII
cresc.
dim.
p
1.
2.
VI
Dal Segno al Fine

Mazurka Op. 17, No. 4

original key: A minor

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

poco riten.

a tempo
dolce
ten.
ten.

69
73
77
81
85
89
ten.
ff

93
ten.
III5
97
p
101
III
III5
104
p
pp
107

sotto voce
sempre piú
calando
perdendosi

Four Mazurkas, Opus 24

à Mr. le Comte de Perthuis

No. 1 So naturally does this one lie on the fretboard, it might have been written for the guitar. It presents no technical difficulties.

No. 2 The lydian melody in the B section and the modulation up one half-step to D♭ major in the C section make this Mazurka an easy favorite, so unusual do the effects sound on guitar. In spite of some quick shifting and strong upper position skills, it is unexpectedly idiomatic.

No. 3 A lovely guitar miniature, this offering presents no special difficulties.

No. 4 The most heroic and involved of the entire collection so far, this selection requires strong upper-position skills and a command of contrapuntal textures. It is the high dynamic level required in measures 20, 52 and 116 that makes this the sole selection offered requiring a 20-fret; an artificial harmonic high-C would simply be too soft for the desired musical effect. The transition in the coda to a major tonic is breathtakingly beautiful and quite easy to play.

Mazurka Op. 24, No. 1

original key: G minor

Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

con anima
cresc.

riten.
III5
p
dim.
a tempo
II5
II5
II5
sempre piu p
riten.
pp

Mazurka Op. 24, No. 2

original key

Allegro non troppo
(♩ = 108)

Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

riten.
rubato
riten.
a tempo
tr
tr
piu f

riten.
a tempo
dolce
sotto voce
sempre p e legato

poco riten.
a tempo

III
97
101
sotto voce
105
pp
109
pp
diminuendo sempre
113
117

Mazurka Op. 24, No. 3

original key: A♭ major

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

II 4
VII 4
fz
p
dolce
1.
2.
II 3
dolcissimo
perdendosi
ossia:

Mazurka Op. 24, No. 4

accelerando,
ritenuto
dim.
a tempo
cresc.
ff
p
piú agitato e stretto
cresc.

legato
sotto voce
con anima

dolcissimo
pp
p
ritenuto
a tempo
cresc.
ff
pp
con forza
ff
sotto voce
tr
cresc.

VI
accelerando
ritenuto
dim.
a tempo
cresc.
piú agitato e stretto
cresc.
III

riten.
dim.
calando
pp
mancando
pp
sempre rallent.
smorzando
fz
p

Four Mazurkas, Opus 30

a la Princesse de Würtemburg

No. 1 Quite idiomatic, this one is a pleasure to play. Be careful to observe the articulation markings in the accompaniment, as they add significantly to the final texture.

No. 2 Gentle and easy, this Mazurka offers a delightful chromatic sequence in the B section which, if played without hurrying, sounds both startling and inevitable. It is the only one in the collection which begins in one key and ends in another.

No. 3 This Mazurka's compelling alternation of the major and minor modes in the A section make it one of the most memorable. While the passagework in the B section is involved and at times tricky, the careful fingerings enable a legato and musical rendering. Be sure to adhere to the notated durations.

No. 4 This Mazurka is deeply expressive and somewhat mysterious, a quality emphasized by the C-tuning. The left-hand-pluck technique used in conjunction with a continuous cross-string trill in mm. 39-40 and 55-56 is unusual and takes some practice, but the resulting effect is a fair representation of the original. The descending chromatic sequence in the coda is quite playable if the fingerings are followed closely.

Mazurka Op. 30, No. 1

original key: C minor

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

Allegro non tanto

VII⁴
VI
XI³
XI³
dim.
XI³
poco riten.
a tempo
p

39
f
43
46
49
IX3
VII3
dim.
52
(7)

Mazurka Op. 30, No. 2

original key: B minor

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

VII5
V3
p poco a poco cresc.
VII5
V3
p
V3
V
p

47
51
poco cresc.
54
VII 5
57
V 3
p poco a poco cresc.
60
63
VII 5
V 3
fz

Mazurka Op. 30, No. 3

original key: D♭ major

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

Allegro non troppo

con anima
dolce
sotto voce
ben legato

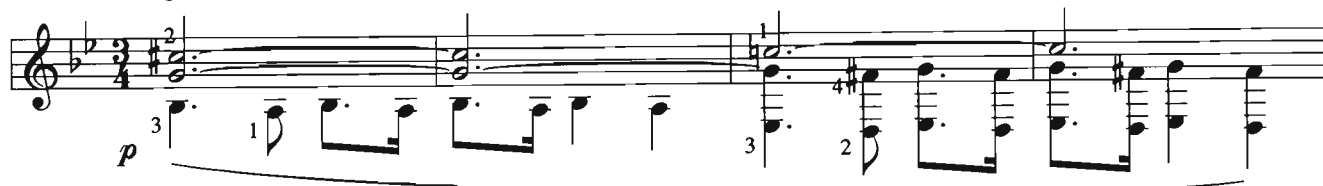
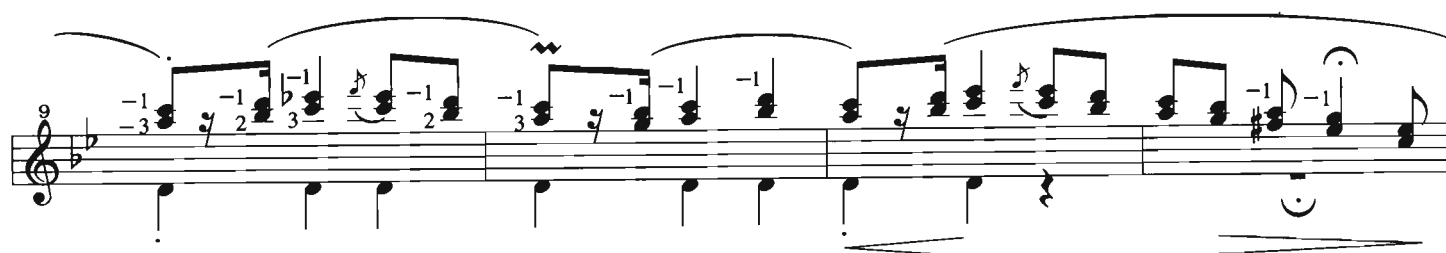
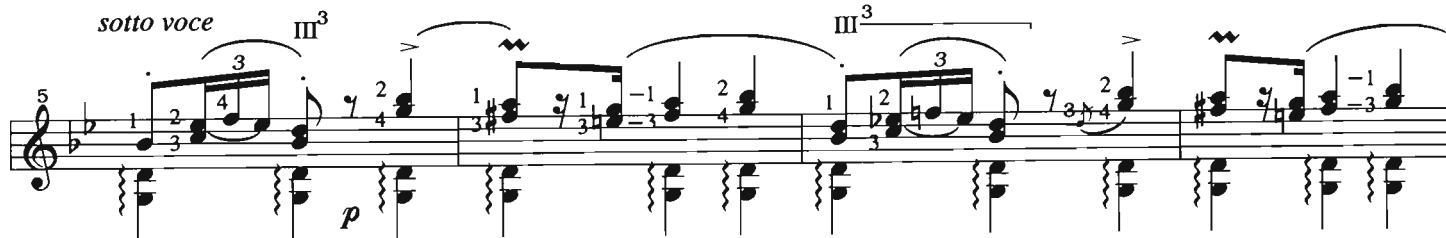
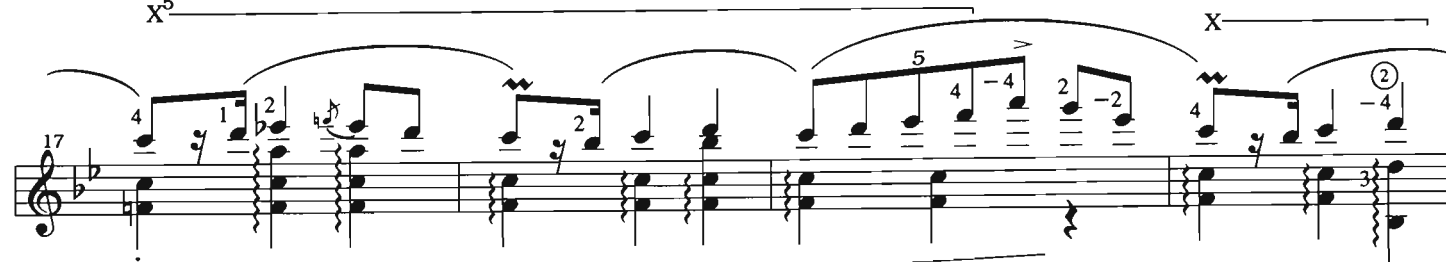
cresc.

slentando
dim.
a tempo
risoluto

Mazurka Op. 30, No. 4

original key: C♯ minor

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

poco rit.
a tempo
sempre p
* Use cross-string trill (p-a-i-m)
x Strike notes with LH 4th finger

dim.
pp
p
poco rit.
f
a tempo
sempre p
con anima

IX4
cresc.
ten.
X3
ten.
ff
III5
III h
X5
p
stretto
cresc.
X3
ff

III5
p
dim.
legato
p
sotto voce
p
X5
X

poco stretto
p
dim.
slentando

Four Mazurkas, Opus 33

à Mlle. la Comtesse Mostowska

No. 1 Simple and effective, this one could have been written for guitar.

No. 2 This Mazurka is one of the few that draws the imagination directly to the dance floor. The A section should be played rhythmically and quickly, with strong articulation. The B section invites a more introspective approach in the opening phrase, with a vigorous answer phrase providing contrast. The strummed chords in mm. 66-72 can be played effectively with a single-finger rasgueado, capturing some of the forcefulness of the musical gesture. In the coda, it is possible to demonstrate virtuosic skill with the composer's "accelerando", right up to the final high A. The final bass-note A (a 12th-fret harmonic) should be played with forceful resonance.

No. 3 The unusual scordatura used in this short, simple piece enables the key change to be played with ease; the beauty of the modulations both to E♭ major and back to G major are breathtaking and, as rendered here, highly idiomatic. The fingerings may seem fussy but enable extremely legato playing.

No. 4 The key to a successful performance of this extended work lies in resisting the temptation to overplay in the B section. While thunderous on the piano, this material sounds better and is easier on the guitar if it is approached with some restraint. The unexpectedly idiomatic character of the climactic D section (mm. 162-177) is one of the joys of playing this Mazurka.

Mazurka Op. 33, No. 1

original key: G♯ minor

Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

VII4
p
dim.
f
VII5
dim.

Mazurka Op. 33, No. 2

original key: D major

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

II 5
II h
pp
IV3
IV4
IX3
ff
IX3
VII3
IX3
pp
IX3
VII3
V3

cresc.
1.
2.

75
f
3
79
3
83
pp
3
87
3
91
f
3
95
3

99
pp
3
103
3
2
5
107
ff
3
3
111
3
115
pp
3

accelerando
smorzando

Mazurka Op. 33, No. 3

III5
I3
I3
III3
VIII3
III5
I3
I4
p

Mazurka Op. 33, No. 4

sotto voce
dim.
IV
VII4
XI4
113

54
XI4
sfz
58
IX
X3
XII3
fz
62
VII4
VIII4
66
p
70
f
74
78

sotto voce
dim.
sotto voce

dim.
f
fz
sfz
fz
p
fz

dolcissimo
IX
p
fz
dolcissimo
VII
f

ossia:
VII3
legato
pp
f
poco rit.
p

198
f
202
206
210
sotto voce
213
dim.
216
dim.
221

Four Mazurkas, Opus 41

à Mr. E. Witwicki

No. 1 This Mazurka offers the advanced player an effective concert tour-de-force. The engaging opening, set in the phrygian mode, develops into a finely crafted work with a richly satisfying climax and a deeply somber conclusion. Watch for the hemiolas in mm. 33-34, 37-38, 53-54, 61-62, and the remarkable hemiolas-by-ornament in mm. 97-102. To help establish continuity with the other opuses in that the longest and most elaborate is generally placed last in the set, this Mazurka is sometimes re-numbered fourth.

No. 2 The unusual scordatura here enables the gorgeous B section with the dominant pedal to be played with ease, as well as offering the player the rich sonority of the E7 chords near the end. It is exceptionally accessible.

No. 3 This Mazurka has been fingered with the greatest care to enable a very quick performance with the least difficulty. The material in the B section (mm. 39-54) requires some extra attention, but will be found to work well once grasped. A slight ritard leading up to the high C♯ in m. 75, though not in the original, helps in the preparation of the artificial harmonic.

No. 4 A new scordatura in this one facilitates another exquisite B section, this one with a mediant pedal. Note the hemiolas in the treble only in mm. 18-19 and 22-23, and in general but subtle use in mm. 42-48.

Mazurka Op. 41, No. 1

original key: C♯ minor

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

cresc.
dim.

cresc.
riten.
a tempo
pp

cresc.
III 5
I h
f

VII4
ossia:
V2
cresc.
V2

smorz.

Mazurka Op. 41, No. 2

original key

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

IV3
p
f
IX5
IX
VII5
VI
IV
IV

sostenuto
ff
dimin.
rallent.

Mazurka Op. 41, No. 3

original key: B major

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

II
VII
fz
III
f
V
VIII
cresc.
XIV
X
ff

VII4
sfz
fz
fz
X3
IX2
dimin.
fz
IX
II4
p

Mazurka Op. 41, No. 4

original key: A♭ major

Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

dimin.
VII3
X3
X3

sotto voce
VII
pp
dolce

62
f
66
70
V5
VII3
VI3
VII3
74
79
dimin.

Three Mazurkas, Opus 50

à Mr. Léon Szmitkowski

No. 1 One of the most interesting and exhuberent of the entire collection, this rather complex and at times contrapuntal work fits the guitar well in this tuning. With some practice, the terrifically exciting D section is possible to play both legato and at tempo. Throughout, the inner voices need special attention for clarity.

No. 2 The tessitura in this setting is deliberately high to allow the melody to speak exceptionally clearly. While it requires some barring, the effect is well worth it. Note the hemiolas in mm. 31-32, 35-36 and 38-39. It is important to observe the articulation markings in the trio.

No. 3 Considered by many pianists to be the most important of the Mazurkas, this piece is conceived on a larger scale than most of the others. A commanding control of contrapuntal textures is required. Numerous hemiolas appear late in the work such as those in mm. 145-146, 149-150, 159-164, and 169-172. An enormous amount of musical awareness and physical strength is required to successfully navigate the extraordinary coda. Once mastered, though, guitarists will find it is unlike any other passage they have ever played, and is well worth the effort.

Mazurka Op. 50, No. 1

original key

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

17
f
p
21
f
p
25
f
29
33
fz
37
p

V5
III4
I 4
III 5
VII4
ten.
VII3
VII
fz

ten.
p sempre
8va

Mazurka Op. 50, No. 2

original key: A♭ major

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

44
48
52
56
60
p
146

VII3
VII
IV 4
II
VII
cresc.
p
rit.
cresc.
a tempo
fz
cresc.

84
88
92
96
100
3
p
2
1
2
3

Mazurka Op. 50, No. 3

original key: C♯ minor

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

legato

sostenuto
legato

VIII
II
f
p

VIII
III
II
VI
II
III

fz
p
fz
p
fz
p
cresc.
p
cresc.

dim.
slentando

Three Mazurkas, Opus 56

à Mlle. C. Maberly

No. 1 Another sweeping and difficult work, it nevertheless is realized here effectively on the guitar. The opening section, or rondo, is quite straightforward and playable. The skills required in the first episode, in A♭ major, are more significant, but it is more the key and the resultant lack of open strings which render it so, not the actual passagework, which is quite direct and carefully fingered. The tempo, however, must be fast, rather like a waltz. Note that the musical lines in the episodes imply a continuous hemiola. The coda requires stamina and an ability to craft long phrases of three-voice counterpoint.

No. 2 The drone fifths in the A section of this selection are wonderfully effective in this open-C tuning, and make the moving voices fully accessible. Only in the D section does the material become more challenging, with the presentation of a true canon at the octave. Even here, though, the delightful passage works surprisingly well with the given fingerings.

No. 3 This Mazurka is an extraordinary nocturne-like work with little to connect it stylistically to the dance-oriented compositions of some of the earlier opus numbers. Depending on the performer's chosen tempo, it can end up the longest Mazurka in the collection. Though physically one of the easiest to play, its sometimes cryptic musical material requires some thought to interpret convincingly. In the given key and tuning, it lies comfortably on the fretboard.

Mazurka Op. 56, No. 1

original key: B major

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

Allegro non tanto

II⁴
cresc.
f
ritenuto

Poco piu mosso
leggiero
VIII
IX

sempre legato
Tempo 1
dolce
cresc.
ritenuto
IV
I
II

Poco piu mosso
leggiero

rallentando
Tempo 1
p
cresc.
f

185
188
II5
IX
191
VII
IV
II4
194
V
IV
II4
II5
197
II
IV3
II5
201
IX4
8va
f

Mazurka Op. 56, No. 2
original key
⑤= G
⑥= C
Frédéric Chopin
20th fret preferred
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron
Vivace
dim.

p
fz
fz
fz
fz
dolce

V5
II5
dolce
legatissimo

poco ritenuto
a tempo
VII3
II3
V3
dim.
XVII3
fz
ossia:
V5
8va

Mazurka Op. 56, No. 3

original key: C minor

Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

26
p
30
p
34
38
f
p
42
dim.
46
rall.
4
3
0

cresc.

sempre legato
sostenuto

p legato
f
fz
p
p

a tempo
rall.

I5
Ih
III4
IV4
V4
II2
I2
fz
p

dim.

Three Mazurkas, Opus 59

No. 1 A brilliant and exquisite concert work, this offering carries the listener through a wide range of emotions and moods before resolving darkly in the home key of Dm. The awareness of the hemiolas in mm. 55-60 helps the material to "float" over the barlines in one of the most beautiful passages in the entire collection. (Also note those in mm. 63-66). The considerable left-hand challenges in mm. 57-58 are worth the effort for the density of the harmony and the integrity of the counterpoint. The performer is encouraged to allow the passage from m. 69-88 to unfold as one sweeping musical gesture. The trick recapitulation in a key one semitone lower than expected (C# minor), in m. 91, and the subtle, almost sly modulation back to D minor in mm. 104-107, are among the delights of the later Mazurkas.

No. 2 A well-known and oft-played Mazurka, this one is highly convincing, if substantial, on the guitar. Recognizing the hemiolas in mm. 60-67 helps the musical gestures to emerge in that section. Be careful to balance clearly the melody in the bass in mm. 69-76. A little extra practice will enable a legato reading of the astonishing chromatic block chord sequence in mm. 81-88. A quick and brilliant performance of the coda is possible with the given fingerings.

No. 3 A virtuoso tour-de-force, this selection is a terrific concert work for the advanced player. Be careful to observe accents in the score, even in the hemiolas in mm. 32-33 and 104-105. Note the bass and alto voice harmonic suspensions in mm. 78-80. The climactic passage, from m. 116-135, works remarkably well with the suggested fingerings, given the musical power of the material. Be sure to play the high bass-note F# in m. 134 on the 4th string as indicated for the correct effect.

Mazurka Op. 59, No. 1

original key: A minor

I
m a m a m i
III4
III5
tr
ten.
VII5
V3
III4

sotto voce
cresc.
f
p

p
cresc.
f
f
f
p
8va

II5
VII5
ten.
VI5
IV3
II3
IV4
I
III4

VIII5
tr
VII5
V3
III4
VI
VI

Mazurka Op. 59, No. 2

original key: A♭ major

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

mezza voce
fz
fz
fz

rall.
a tempo
VIII
VI
VII
X
IX
II
m
i
a
p
8va
loco
pp

Mazurka Op. 59, No. 3

original key: F♯ minor

Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

dim.
p
ri — te — nu — to

a tempo

sfz
p
f
sfz
p
cresc.

ten.
ten.
ten.
dim.
ten.
cresc.
p m p
p
f
dim.

riten.
a tempo
dim.
cresc.
dim.

accel.
dim.
fz
a tempo sostenuto
mf

Three Mazurkas, Opus 63

à Madame la Comtesse L. Czosnowka

No. 1 Harkening vigorously back to the dance floor, this exuberant Mazurka is both brilliant and gratifyingly guitaristic. Note the extended hemiola in mm. 15-24. Be careful to shape the lines in both the upper and lower voices from mm. 53-66.

No. 2 Dark and full of longing, this is a frequently-performed Mazurka from the later Opuses. While configured for maximum ease and legato, this one requires certain control over varying barre lengths and upper-position playing. Though marked Lento, take note of the rhythmic character of the B section. The elaborately chromatic passage from m. 12-16, ending the phrase (and the piece) with the descending melody, B natural-B flat-G, is hard to imagine coming from the pen of another composer.

No. 3 The C tuning in this arrangement allows for the full range of the melody to be presented intact, preserving the forte high tonic at the end as it occurs in the original for maximum impact. In the B section, a very soft and light touch are required to maintain a full-bodied tone in this low register. Some effort is required to bring out both lines in the canon in mm. 66-73, but the effect is riveting when mastered. The trill in m. 76 is easiest if 4 and 3 are placed in advance.

Mazurka Op. 63, No. 1

original key: B major

Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

IV
dim.
II
II
II
VII
VII
II
II
II

VI5
p
dim.
IV3
IV4
cresc.
fz
IIh
II3
I5

fz
II5
dim.
pp
IX3
8va
f

Mazurka Op. 63, No. 2

original key: F minor

Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

riten.
a tempo

Mazurka Op. 63, No. 3

original key: C♯ minor

⑤ = G
⑥ = C

20th fret preferred

Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

III
II
I
sotto voce
ten.
cresc.

II
I5
p
f
ossia:

Four Mazurkas, Opus 67

(posthumous)

No. 1 A charming and quick Mazurka, this one presents little difficulty on the guitar. Following the phrasing and articulation markings closely will help the character emerge. A very light touch with powerful, robust accents is recommended.

No. 2 The fingering here recommends much shifting in order to permit liberal legato and portamenti. Highly idiomatic, it could have been written for guitar.

No. 3 This Mazurka is quite easy; its lyricism and simplicity make it a favorite. The rapid shifts in the B section are quickly mastered with the given fingerings.

No. 4 Another very easy arrangement, this selection is darkly beautiful. The power of the mood shift in the C section, as it moves to the major mode is revelatory. A liberal use of portamenti is preferred, emphasizing the expressive nature of the melody.

Mazurka Op. 67, No. 1

Posthumous
original key: G major

⑥= D

Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

Vivace (♩= 160)

leggiero
cresc.
dim.
scherzando
marcato

riten.
a tempo
leggiero
cresc.

Mazurka Op. 67, No. 2

Posthumous
original key: G minor

Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

V4
III4
III5
III
8va
(XIII)
p
e leggiero
sotto voce
poco cresc.
mf
fz
sf
f

Mazurka Op. 67, No. 3
Posthumous
original key: C major
Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron
Allegretto (♩ = 144)
rubato
cresc.
poco rit.
a tempo

tr
cresc.
sf
ff
poco rit.
a tempo
ten.
pp
riten.
p

Mazurka Op. 67, No. 4

Posthumous

original key: A minor

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

a tempo
cresc.
dim.
legatissimo
cresc.
rit.
a tempo
cresc.
f
p
mf

marcato
riten.
a tempo
cresc.
dim.
legatissimo

Four Mazurkas, Opus 68

(posthumous)

No. 1 A powerful, vigorous dance, this Mazurka is easily accessible to those with strong hands. An (unlikely) simple rasgueado is recommended for the fz chords in the B section, to maximize their impact. The lyrical C section has one of the loveliest passages in parallel thirds, and is quite playable.

No. 2 A popular and catchy offering, this Mazurka works well on the guitar. Although cross-string trills are required throughout the A section, they are to be performed gently and without force. While the low open F is only used four times, this scordatura enables the entire piece to remain easy and singing.

No. 3 This Mazurka is notable for its short, brilliant trio in the piccolo range. Startling and delightful to hear, it is not unduly difficult in the given configuration. The rest of the arrangement is simple.

No. 4 The degree of chromaticism in this final Mazurka is so characteristic of Chopin's style and presumably so pianistic, that the total success of this guitar rendition may be a surprise. The chords need to be played with maximum control over balance and timbre to enable the listener to discern the movement of the inner voices, but both sections lie quite comfortably on the fretboard. Here, as in Op 7, No. 5, the composer gives the cryptic direction "DC senza fine". In this case, as it was (according to many musicologists) Chopin's last composition, the inscription has, perhaps, special significance.

Mazurka Op. 68, No. 1
Posthumous
original key: C major
Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron
Vivace (♩ = 168)

cresc.

Mazurka Op. 68, No. 2

Posthumous
original key: A minor

Frédéric Chopin
arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

Poco più mosso
mf
cresc.
f
pp
p
mf
pp
legatissimo
poco a poco riten.

Tempo I
rit.
a tempo
p

Mazurka Op. 68, No. 3

Posthumous

original key: F major

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

Allegro, ma non troppo

(♩ = 132)

Poco più vivo
XIV
riten.
Tempo I
V
p
f

Mazurka Op. 68, No. 4

Posthumous

(Fine)
mf
II5
VII
pp
sempre legato
VII
V4
II4
I4
Dal segno senza fine

Two Mazurkas, Without Opus

(posthumous)

"a Emile Gaillard" One of the most beautiful in the collection, this selection is more involved on the guitar than many of the others. The nature of the material in mm. 26-33 as it lies on the fretboard requires strong, facile hands and some practice to master. The sweeping range and beauty of this Mazurka's B section melody is sublime; it takes some effort to control the shape and movement of the line, but the rewards for doing so are rich. In the coda, a continuous cross-string trill punctuated by a melodic line in the tenor creates a hauntingly expressive effect that is riveting once mastered.

"Notre Temps" A deeply plaintive piece, far in mood and character from the original dance, this Mazurka is offered here in two versions. The first, set in Dm, is quite playable, though the slightly overlapping voices in the A section require some effort to render with clarity. The B section works well, enabling a nearly consistent use of the parallel octave style of melodic writing employed here. The second version, in Em, uses a highly unorthodox scordatura. The sixth and fifth strings, now low B and E respectively, enable the magnificant descending melodic line in the bass its full range and power, with no alterations. The remaining material is comfortable and can be executed with ease and grace. A startling composition on the guitar in this version, the guitarist will appreciate its unique timbre and sonority.

à son ami Émile Gaillard

Mazurka

original key: A minor

⑤ = G
⑥ = D

20th fret preferred

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

Allegretto

p

fz

VI3
VIII3
III
IX3
V3
III3
V4
legato
p

cresc.
p
p

ossia:
8va
legato

94
98
102
106
110
V3
III3
III3

* Use cross-string trill fingering *p-a-i-m*, with *p* on the beat.
Allow interruption of trill for each note in melody, all played with *p*.

Mazurka

"Notre Temps"

original key: A minor

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

dim.
dim.

p
poco cresc.

alternate version

Mazurka

"Notre Temps"

original key: A minor

⑤ = E
⑥ = B

Frédéric Chopin

arranged for guitar by Stephen Aron

Allegretto

m i
p
p
dim.
dim.

poco cresc.

94
p
98
102
p
106
110

Stephen Aron
Classical Guitarist

Described by the New York Times as "cultivated and musical", Stephen Aron performs regularly throughout the US and Canada. Of his first CD, *Sketches*, the Cleveland Plain Dealer stated that Aron gives "interpretations that sing with vibrant rhythm, subtle color and a feeling of intimacy." An active participant in new music, Mr. Aron has commissioned and premiered numerous new works. Referring to a performance at a Guitar Foundation of America (GFA) Festival featuring all new music, Soundboard magazine claimed it was "the most original of the festival...expert and entertaining." An avid arranger, Aron's concerts often feature original versions of major works by Schumann, Chopin, Rossini, Haydn, Schubert and others. Mr. Aron's arrangements are published by Mel Bay Publications and Tuscany Editions. In addition to his solo efforts, Aron performs with JoNell Aron, a soprano with whom he has recorded two CD's, one of original arrangements of vaudeville songs called *Shine On Harvest Moon*, and one of original arrangements of sacred songs entitled *In My Heart*, both on the Pavonia Music label. Of *Shine On Harvest Moon*, Fanfare magazine said it was "Warmly recommended", while Classical Guitar said "this CD will obviously have strong appeal." Soundboard called *In My Heart* "one of the best discs to cross my desk." Mr. Aron has adjudicated numerous national and international competitions and has given lectures and taught masterclasses at five GFA Conventions, the Boston Conservatory Guitar Festivals, the Stetson International Guitar Festivals, the Portland Guitar Festival, the Great Lakes Festivals, the Weathersfield Chamber Music Festival, The Appalachian Guitar Festival, the Eastman Guitar Festival, the Rantucci Guitar Festivals, and the Piccolo Spoleto Festival. The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the GFA from 1991-93, his writing is often seen in Soundboard magazine and American String Teacher. In addition to his post as Professor of Music and Chairman of Guitar Studies at the University of Akron (since 1981), Stephen Aron is Teacher of Guitar and founder of the classical guitar studies program at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music (since 1991).

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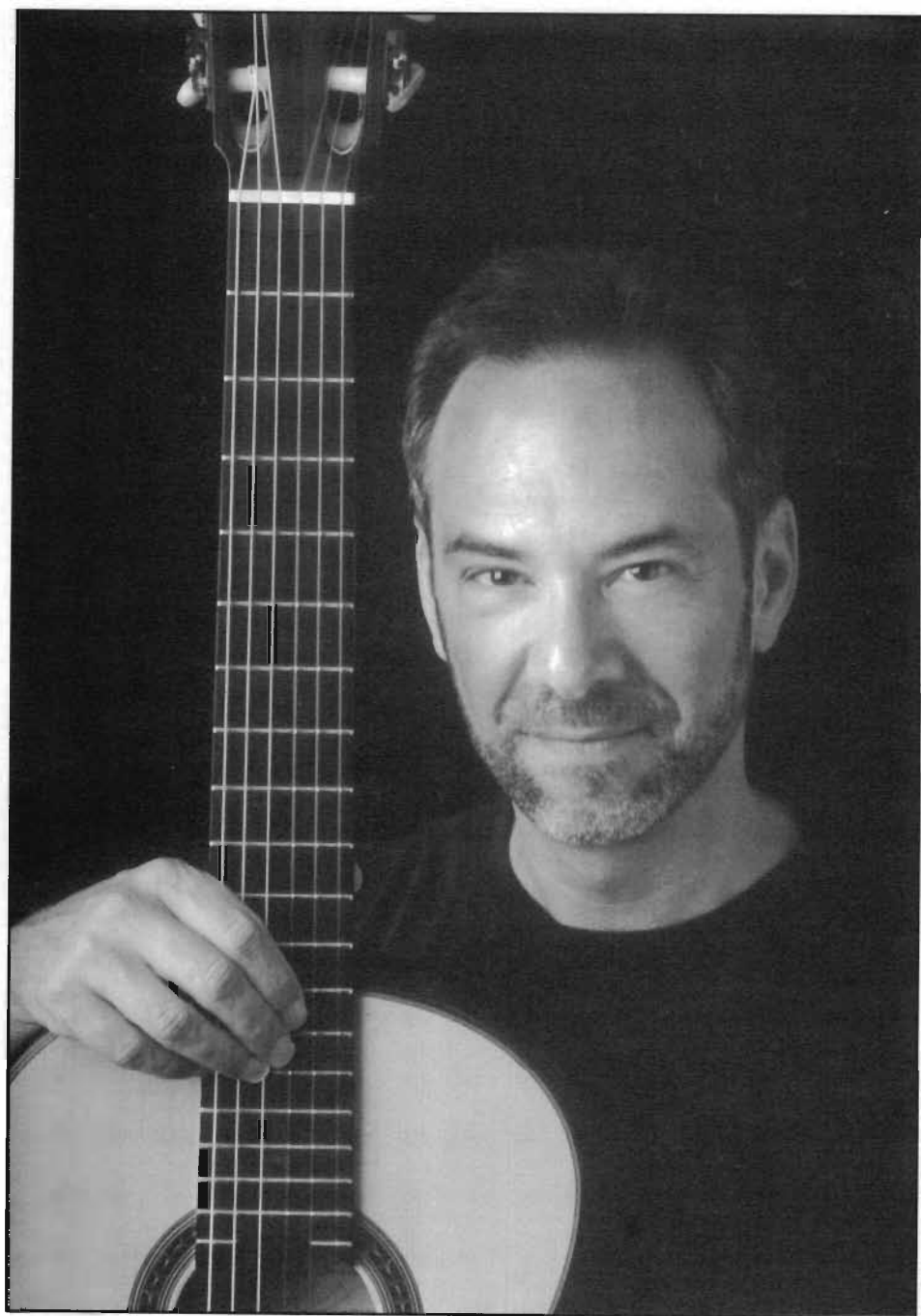
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Stephen Aron

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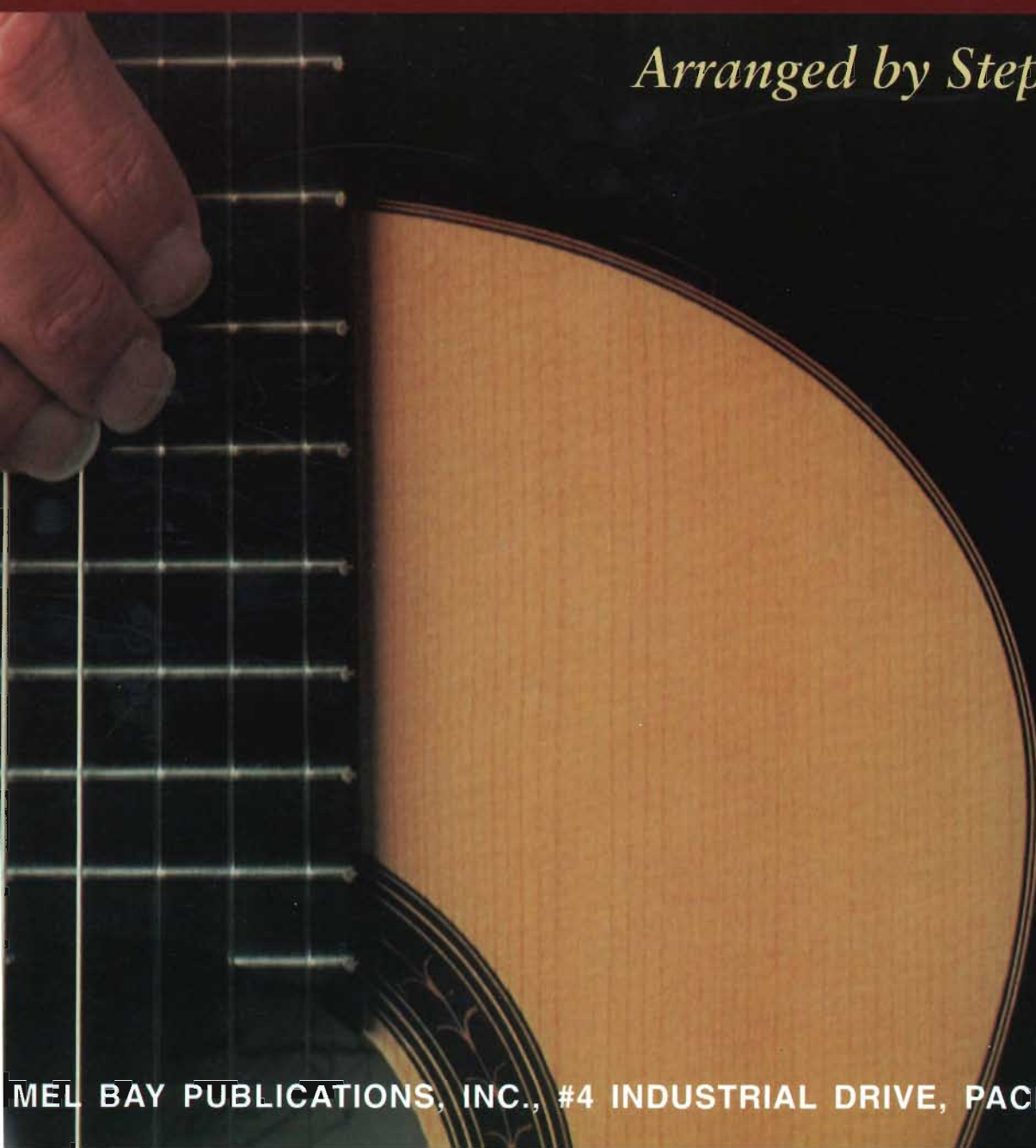
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